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SEEKERS AFTER GOD

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"In evil times men turn their minds more anxiously to religion." Thus wrote that hearty atheist, Lucretius, amidst the alarums of those far-off, uneasy, Roman days. Equally true is the saying of the still more desperate years through which the world has lately been passing. Even before the torrent of war broke, in the confused and restless prelude of the opening century, many hands were outstretched, many hearts yearning for a new vision of God. For God, or for something to take His place, something to give an ultimate meaning to life, an ideal dimension, an underglow of purpose and a deep tide of peace —

"Round our restlessness His rest."

This noteworthy revival of the search for God sharply differentiates itself from the apologetics and exhortations that preceded it during generations of a regnant Christian tradition. Formerly the concept "God" was taken to be clear and definite enough, and the search was for proofs of His existence. Such a book as Clarke's *The Christian Conception of God*, with its complacent elaboration of God's attributes, could regard as obvious heresies the conceptions that are now most astir in the world, and devote the bulk of its five hundred pages to the various lines of supposed proof that the God of orthodox dogma, with His omniscience, omnipotence, aseity, and what not, exists. Now, however, the vast theological library which this volume illustrates (rather more readably than the ruck of them) is, for progressive

thinkers, simply shelved. The question has become, not, Can we believe in this cut-and-dried conception of mediæval and modern orthodoxy, but rather, Is there *any* conception of God that we can accept? In other words, the God-idea has become fluid again, the God of the future is in the making. And this emancipation from the fixity of the conception that had become traditional has led many thinkers who would never have concerned themselves seriously with the God of popular belief, to look afresh at this, perhaps the greatest of human conceptions, and to seek to mould it into a form more consonant with man's maturer experience and more serviceable for his spiritual life.

Matthew Arnold is perhaps as much as any one to be thanked for this unprecedented plasticity of the God idea. With untiring reiteration and serene patience under a storm of abuse, he protested against "our mechanical and materializing theology, with its insane license of affirmation about God . . . just as if he were a man in the next street!" In America, Emerson and, more lately, William James did a great deal to shake up inherited conceptions. The title of a recent volume, *The Enlarging Conception of God*,¹ is significant. But it is still true that "our conception of the universe has grown faster than our thought of God has grown."²

Matthew Arnold's definition of God as "the Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness"—and for all good, as he parenthetically admits—was an attempt to rescue the God-idea from dogmatic theology and make it an empirical conception which the most convinced rationalist might accept—nay, must accept, because the Power, whatever its ultimate and inner nature, is incontestably here in the world. The Huxleys and the Cliffords, many of the leaders of thought in the

¹ H. A. Youtz, *The Enlarging Conception of God*. The Macmillan Co., 1914.

² W. H. P. Faunce, *What does Christianity Mean?* F. H. Revell Co., 1912.

Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic world, clinging to their intellectual integrity at whatever cost of odium and personal loss, were openly disavowing belief in God; while in Latin Europe the belief, outside of the Catholic Church, was already obsolescent. Is there less intellectual conscience in the twentieth century, less conviction of the truths of evolution and the presence of "law" in the world? On the contrary, these beliefs, then daring, have now become commonplaces. If there is less avowed atheism today (and certainly atheism is less blatant, if perhaps more widespread), it is because it seems now rather needless to be an atheist. There are so many conceptions of God afloat that any one at all widely read can scarcely fail to find one suited to his mental outlook and convictions.

Even among the socialist masses, generally taken to be atheistic, there is not so much denial of God as denial of the church-conceptions of God. Thus Mr. Blatchford, the editor of the London *Clarion*, in a book circulated widely among Socialists,³ expresses in plain and vigorous words his disbelief in "the Bible God," in a personal God, in an omnipotent God, but does not say there is *no* sort of God. There is here none but a negative side to the modern movement; but one feels that the ejection of the "orthodox" conception leaves clear room for the preaching of the naturalistic God of contemporary thought. It would not be surprising if, under the impulse of post-bellum readjustment, such a God were to be espoused by some eloquent revivalist and accepted by millions of spiritually famished men and women who have left forever the old dogmas and (unless, indeed, it show greater signs of openness to the critical spirit than at present) the Christian Church.

The present writer conducted in 1912 a questionnaire among college graduates in this country, investigating

³ Robert Blatchford, *God and My Neighbor*. Chicago, Chas. H. Kerr Co., 1911.

among other matters, their belief in God. The results⁴ showed that of the several hundred who replied, some 34 per cent. believed firmly in "a personal God," 23 per cent. firmly disbelieved, and the rest were more or less uncertain. Slightly more than 50 per cent. were convinced of the omnipotence of God. But very few (about 1 per cent.) rejected the belief in God *in toto*. Professor Leuba's recent more elaborate investigation⁵ gives, among many other interesting statistical results, the following: Among college *students* (*my* questionees were graduates of a dozen years' standing), 56 per cent. of the men believed in a personal God, and 82 per cent. of the women. Another part of the inquiry, addressed to American scientists, historians, etc., stated the belief about which this information was desired as follows: "I believe in a God to whom one may pray in the expectation of receiving an answer. By 'answer,' I do not mean the subjective, psychological effect of prayer." The men addressed were divided into those of lesser and those of greater eminence, using as a criterion the stars in *American Men of Science*. Of the men "of lesser eminence," 48 per cent. affirmed the above belief; of the men "of greater eminence," 32 per cent. Some special classes, sociologists and psychologists, show considerably less acceptance of the belief, the "greater" psychologists falling as low as 13.2 per cent.

What is noteworthy in these data is not merely the apparent waning of this particular conception of God as education and scientific training advance, but also the great number of addressees who went out of their way to explain that they did believe in *some* conception of God. With many the conception is very indefinite, with others it is fairly clear-cut; but with few is it purely traditional. It is this educated public that furnishes the readers of the rich literature dealing with God that

⁴ See *The Independent*, vol. 75, p. 755.

⁵ J. H. Leuba, *The Belief in God and Immortality*. Sherman, French, & Co., Boston, 1916.

has sprung up so thickly since the dawning of our present century.

For certain types of mind pantheism will doubtless always be alluring. Many of Emerson's utterances had a pantheistic ring, as when, standing on the summit of Greylock, he ejaculated: "God! It's all God!" His friend Carlyle was more thoroughly pantheistic — and not afraid of the term, as his reply to Sterling's accusation witnesses: "Pantheism! Pantheism! What does it matter, it's religion." Coming to our own day, the veteran and beloved John Burroughs equates the terms "God" and "Nature." "We must get rid of the great moral governor or head director. He is a fiction of our own brains. We must recognize only Nature, the All; call it God if we will, but divest it of all anthropological conceptions. . . . Here is this vast congeries of vital forces which we call Nature . . . the sum and synthesis of all powers and qualities, infinite and incomprehensible. This is all the God we can know, and this we cannot help but know." ⁶

Similarly, ex-President Eliot, in his famous address on *The Religion of the Future*,⁷ declares that "the new thought of God will be its most characteristic element." "The Infinite Spirit pervades the universe, just as the spirit of a man pervades his body, and acts, consciously or unconsciously, in every atom of it." It is "one omnipresent, eternal Energy, informing and inspiring the whole creation at every instant of time and throughout the infinite spaces." This neo-pantheism is widespread enough to induce one of our leading publishing houses to reprint Seeley's *Natural Religion*, a treatise once famous but lately out of print. This little book combines the most explicit frankness with literary charm

⁶ John Burroughs, *The Light of Day*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1901.

⁷ Delivered at the Harvard Summer School of Theology, July 22, 1909, and subsequently printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* and in pamphlet form.

in an unusual degree, and remains perhaps the clearest popular exposition of the pantheistic conception.⁸ Dr. Campbell's "new" theology seems to be of much the same type.⁹

It may be questioned whether the Absolute of the late Professor Royce should be regarded as a pantheistic conception, for the philosophic approach, highly technical and elaborate, gives it very different connotations. But certainly his Absolute was the One inclusive Reality, a Reality all-perfect, super-personal, transcending time and space, and certainly it gathered about itself the atmosphere of the Christian God. In his last great work,¹⁰ Royce struck into rather a new vein, and defined God in a way far more in accord with the now dominant tendency, as "the spirit of the beloved community."

Professor Hocking, whose debt to this master is evident and acknowledged, declares that pantheism is, like all our human conceptions, too poor, too inadequate to the truth. With the fervor of a mystic, he describes God as One and Ineffable, union of all contradictions, ground of all reality. But for the non-philosophic mind, dazed by mysticism and metaphysics alike, such statements as "God is that which does whatever Substance is found to do"¹¹ will suffice to classify the writer, for practical purposes, with the pantheists; for this practical purpose, at least, that his God, being omnipotent and omnipresent, has to answer for the evil as well as the good in the world.

This is, of course, the insistent dissatisfaction with Absolutes and deifications of Nature. From the time of John Stuart Mill (to go no farther back), whose forcible essay on *Nature*, and whose sensational refusal to worship an omnipotent God even if he were to be damned

⁸ Sir John R. Seeley, *Natural Religion*. The Macmillan Co., 1916.

⁹ R. J. Campbell, *The New Theology*. The Macmillan Co., 1907.

¹⁰ Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*. The Macmillan Co., 1913.

¹¹ W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*. Yale University Press, 1912.

therefor, paved the way for his rather hesitating belief in a limited God, to the present day, pantheisms of every stripe have had to meet objection not only from the orthodox, but, on the other side, from those whose horror of evil prevents their tolerating a God who includes (however he may "transcend") evil in his being or as his expression or creation.

Mill was an earnest seeker after God, and so was Richard Jefferies, whose *Story of My Heart*¹² is one of the most beautiful books in our language. To be sure, Jefferies passionately repudiates belief in God: "How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end, and are ordered by a humane intelligence! It is the most utter falsehood and a crime against the human race. . . . Human suffering is so great, so endless, so awful that I can hardly write of it." But this is clearly a denial merely of the omnipotence of God; while in Jefferies' constantly reiterated longing for "something higher than Deity," and indeed in the mysticism and "soul-thirst" which pervades the book, we see what most of us would call the search for a more tenable conception of God, certainly not at all a satisfied atheism. Mr. Hobhouse has recently phrased more calmly what Jefferies and many others have felt: "The moral indifference of nature forces itself upon us; and it becomes evident that the real as such is not spiritual nor the creation of anything that is purely spiritual, just, or good, in the human sense. The spiritual is an *element in Reality*."¹³

Christian orthodoxy has never been clear or consistent upon this point; it has striven to reconcile the comfortable conviction that

"God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world,"

¹² Longmans, Green, & Co., ninth impression, 1906.

¹³ L. T. Hobhouse, *Development and Purpose*. The Macmillan Co., 1913.

with the moral conviction that evil is evil and must, with God's help, be fought and cast out. The conception of Satan, taken over from the Persian religion, has prevented Christianity from becoming a clear-cut monotheism, as Mohammedanism has been; many Christian writings depict their God as a striving God, not unlike the Ahura-Mazda of Zoroaster, or the finite God of William James,¹⁴ whose success is dependent in part upon our faithfulness.

Lately Mr. Wells has advertised this conception to an audience wider than James (in spite of the latter's enormously superior scholarship and brilliance of style) could reach. It is interesting to note that in an earlier book¹⁵ he refrained from applying the term "God" to his conception, on the ground that "the run of people even nowadays mean something more and something different when they say 'God.'" In *Anticipations*¹⁶ he had used the term freely, but with no positive definition, contenting himself "with denying the self-contradictory absurdities of an obstinately anthropomorphic theology, as, for example, that God is an omniscient mind. This is the last vestige of that barbaric theology which regarded God as a vigorous but uncertain old gentleman with a beard and an inordinate lust for praise and propitiation." At last, however, Mr. Wells has succeeded in formulating his conception of God, and has written, as we all know, a whole book to expound it.¹⁷

Mr. Wells is worth reading, in spite of defects of scholarship and occasional intemperance of language, because of his clearness and candor, his contagious enthusiasm and assurance, and because, as in so many other matters,

¹⁴ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Longmans, Green, & Co., 1902.

¹⁵ H. G. Wells, *First and Last Things*. Harper & Brothers, 1908.

¹⁶ Harper & Brothers, 1901.

¹⁷ H. G. Wells, *God the Invisible King*. The Macmillan Co., 1917.

his mind is a faithful index of the movement of one of the main currents, perhaps *the* main current, of contemporary thought. It is easy to offer objections to his view, as the denominational papers have naturally done, and as, from the opposite, atheistic, point of view Mr. Archer so quickly and cleverly did.¹⁸ But Mr. Wells will survive this cross-fire, and his vigorous little book is having a very considerable influence.

We find it here distinctly asserted that God is not the creator of the universe, but "comes, we know not whence, into the conflict of life. He works in men and through men. . . . He is the undying human memory, the increasing human will." This is reminiscent of earlier expressions by a scholarly American writer,¹⁹ who had defined "God" as "our own ideal life," "the finer life that lives potentially in ourselves," "the deeper, more comprehensive self in all men that is urging to realization."

Is this Platonism? Is it the conception, so eloquently presented by T. H. Green,²⁰ of God as "our unrealized ideal of a Best," the name a symbol for that perfection which eludes us in earthly things, but which we must ever love and follow? Certainly we get the true Platonic note in Tagore's "When the soul seeks God she seeks her final escape from this incessant gathering and heaping and never coming to an end. It is not an additional object that she seeks, but it is the permanent in all that is impermanent, the highest abiding joy unifying all enjoyments."²¹ We find it again in the writings of that master-preacher, Dr. George A. Gordon, who speaks of God as "the meaning, beauty, spirit, and power of our whole experience. . . . God as the perfect good or

¹⁸ William Archer, *God and Mr. Wells*. New York, Knopf, 1917.

¹⁹ H. A. Overstreet, *Hibbert Journal*, vol. 11, p. 394; vol. 13, p. 155, and *Forum*, vol. 52, p. 499 (1913 and 1914).

²⁰ T. H. Green, *The Witness of God*. Longmans, Green, & Co., 1897.

²¹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana*. The Macmillan Co., 1913.

satisfaction moves the universe. . . . He moves the rational spirit of man through love of the highest, and thus draws the soul to Himself." And again, he speaks of "the good, that is only another name for God."²² These are almost the words of Professor Bousset, who frankly declares that "the Christian belief regards God and moral good as one."²³

Such utterances seem almost as unmistakable as Emerson's "I, the imperfect, adore my own perfect." God seems relegated to the realm of the ideal, which, though the one reality to Plato, is sharply contrasted with the real by contemporary philosophy and common sense. But after all, we must not press a single aspect of these writers' thought. Pantheism, Dualism, Platonism — these labels do injustice to the many-sidedness, the synthetic power — or is it a loose eclecticism? — of modern thought.

Christian theology has always been synthetic, as in the doctrine of the Trinity, which insists that God, although One, is *both* the Father *and* the Son *and* the Holy Ghost. Moreover, this ancient dogma, in spite of Biblical criticism and the spread of a rationalistic spirit, persists. It is worth asking whether, though a scrutiny of the historic causes that produced it scarcely recommends it to us, it be not, after all, based upon a threefold human experience.

God the Father is the Pantheist's God: "The word God is a symbol to designate the universe in its ideal-achieving capacity."²⁴ But for the average Christian, God the Son has been far more real. That is, he has found God not so much in the heavens that declare His glory, as in this spiritual leader whose name our Church bears. So Dr. Lyman Abbott, who writes to a wide

²² George A. Gordon, *Aspects of the Infinite Mystery*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916.

²³ W. Bousset, *The Faith of a Modern Protestant*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

²⁴ G. B. Foster, *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence*. University of Chicago Press, 1909.

audience and typifies the liberal spirit in the American Church, confesses that the old God of theology is an idol, and that its place has been taken for him "by the God who has been revealed to me in the earthly life and character of Jesus of Nazareth."²⁵ And a chapter dealing with Christ in one of Dean Hodges' recent books²⁶ bears the title, *The Supreme Disclosure of God*.

But it is God the Holy Spirit that is most ardently preached by the new prophets. Among them there is none who writes with more charm and tenderness than that intrepid soldier, Sir Francis Younghusband. The first leader of white men to penetrate into the forbidden city of Lhasa, he is now leader in the spiritual adventure. In two not very large volumes he gives us of his experience and his personality, and therewith much food for thought.²⁷ "We are realizing nowadays," he says, "that the old guardian God of our childhood never existed. . . . What then is to take his place? . . . We are abandoning the idea of God the Father, and we are realizing the idea of God the Holy Spirit. We are giving up the idea that the Kingdom of God is in Heaven, and we are finding that the Kingdom of God is *within* us. We are relinquishing the old idea of an external God, above, apart, and separate from ourselves; and we are taking on the new idea of an internal spirit working within us — a constraining, immanent influence, a vital, propelling impulse vibrating through us all, expressing itself and fulfilling its purpose through us, and uniting us together in one vast spiritual unity."

Now Mr. Wells, though a sort of super-democrat in his political thinking, and in spite of his recent hints that the British monarchy may have outgrown its usefulness, nevertheless speaks of God as King. Other

²⁵ *The Outlook*, vol. 117, p. 193 (1917).

²⁶ George Hodges, *Everyman's Religion*. The Macmillan Co., 1911.

²⁷ Sir Francis Younghusband, *Within*. London, Williams & Norgate, 1912; *Mutual Influence, A Re-View of Religion*. New York, Duffield & Co., 1915.

voices, however, like that of Younghusband, are proclaiming the doom of that conception of divine autocracy. Professor Overstreet, for example, declares that as political theory has advanced from the conception of the sovereign as an arbitrary ruler to the view that the ruler represents the will of the ruled, so theology must develop "from the view that God is the individual person in whose princely hands lies the sovereignty of the universe, to the view, more nearly consistent with the spirit of democracy, that God is the Common Will of all living creatures." Prominent among exponents of this view was Walter Rauschenbusch, whose premature death is a grief to us all. In his last volume, he wrote,²⁸ "Those whose religious life has been influenced by the social gospel are instinctively out of sympathy with autocratic conceptions of God."

Is "Father," then, a fitting title for God? The naturalistic thinkers of the past generation — such as Emerson, Carlyle, Seeley, Arnold — thought so, and, at least occasionally, made use of it. Not a few today, however, are, like Younghusband, abandoning even that. Mr. Wells insists, with glowing rhetoric, that God is Youth, and regards as obsolete the "patriarchal phase" of religion. Mr. Overstreet had already insisted that the God of loving protection, the Parent God, must be supplanted by the God that is our own inner ideal life. And Professor Adler, a prophet, as we all know, of the deepest spiritual fervor, had even earlier declared not only that it is "an anomaly for men who, in the realm of politics, regard king-worship as a thing of the past, to preserve king-worship in religion," but further, that the metaphor "Heavenly Father" no longer represents truly the conception which is possible to us.²⁹

²⁸ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. The Macmillan Co., 1917.

²⁹ Felix Adler, *The Religion of Duty*. New York, McClure, Phillips & Co., 1905.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, who, in that delightful play *Androcles and the Lion*, showed his ability to appreciate the Christian spirit, tells us in its preface that "Jesus declared that the reality behind the popular belief in God was a creative spirit in ourselves, called by him the Heavenly Father, and by us Evolution, Élan Vital, Life Force, and other names." One may question Mr. Shaw's scholarship and taste in ascribing his own point of view to the Galilean, and his equation of terms is doubtless too indiscriminate; but it is suggestive of the attempts being made on all hands to find scientific equivalents for hallowed terms and doctrines, to discover their empirical foundation.

This is the clearest impression made upon a spectator of the confused and groping quest of these contemporary pilgrims. They are looking for what the present writer called in a recent volume ³⁰ "The God of Experience." They are seeking so to formulate and "explain their use of the term 'God' as to make the denial of His reality impossible." ³¹ Mr. Wells speaks for many when he says that "modern religion bases its knowledge of God and its account of God entirely upon experience. It has encountered God. It does not argue about God. It relates." Doubtless there is much that experience cannot tell us, or has not told us, about God, as about everything else, that we should like to know. But is it not a valuable achievement to be able to assure the coming generation that the term represents not a mere unevindenced fable or superstition but a solid reality found in normal human experience?

Is this reality what our forebears meant by the name "God"? Or must we, if scrupulous, find a new term for our altered conception? As to this, no one has spoken more to the point than that earnest lover of truth, so

³⁰ Durant Drake, *Problems of Religion*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916.

³¹ H. B. Mitchell, *Talks on Religion*. Longmans, Green, & Co., 1908.

maligned in his day, and not yet sufficiently appreciated, Ernest Renan.³² "The word 'God,'" he wrote, "being in possession of the respect of humanity, having a long prescription, and having been employed in noble poetry, its suppression would put humanity off the track. Although it is not very unequivocal, as the scholastics say, it corresponds to an idea sufficiently definite. . . . Tell the simple to live a life of aspiration after truth and beauty, and these words will have no meaning for them. Tell them to love God, not to offend God, and they will understand you marvellously well."

Many contemporaries are voicing the same feeling. To quote but one, that exquisite essayist and poet, Mr. Le Gallienne, protested some years ago against the tendency of modern thinkers to describe the ultimate Reality by "some cold and clumsy circumlocution, to speak of the great Unknown and Unknowable, of the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness, or maybe simply of Nature: all phrases which fail to include the most essential quality of the conception they attempt to express, namely, its awful and mysterious majesty. It cannot be doubted that the one English word for that conception must ever be — God."³³

It is natural for the scrupulous to feel that, to avoid ambiguity, an altered concept should have a new name. This was doubtless what the professor in the story had in mind when he began his lecture with the words: "There are those who say there is a God; there are those who say there is no God. Gentlemen, the truth lies between them."

Ambiguous the word "God" hopelessly is. But what is the core of meaning that persists through all fluctuations? Is Dr. Coit right in saying in a remarkable recent

³² Ernest Renan, *Intolerance in Scepticism*, in *The Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Studies*.

³³ Richard Le Gallienne, *The Religion of a Literary Man*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893.

volume³⁴ that "to ask, Is there a God? is to ask whether there be in very fact any source from which supreme blessings will be gained if one attends steadfastly and reverently to it"? However this may be, any conception that has had such a checkered history might well suffer, one would suppose, a few more changes. No one except the uncritical adherents of traditional dogma believes today in such a God as the ancient Jews worshipped; it is doubtful if many *really* believe in the grim potter-God of St. Paul. Mature thought must — though often with a passing sadness of heart, and always with utmost reverence for the thought and faith of the past — put away childish things. It is impossible that the great truths which science has revealed in the past nineteen centuries should not profoundly have altered our view of the ultimate realities from that of the naïve and prescientific believers of the primitive Christian gospel. And we must remember that Christian theology, as it eventually crystallized, is more Greek than Hebraic. Perhaps our modern God-ideas have really (as Mr. Shaw evidently feels) more of the spirit of the Master's teaching than the Hellenic subtleties of the Nicene creed — or even of the Fourth Gospel.

Certainly contemporary scholarship is doing much to revise our understanding of primitive Christianity. For example, Professor Bowen has conclusively shown in a volume which is one of the best fruits of American Biblical scholarship,³⁵ that the view of the resurrection found even in the Synoptic Gospels differs sharply from that of the earliest apostolic tradition. And another of our leading New Testament scholars, Professor Kirsopp Lake of Harvard, points out³⁶ that the phrase "a personal God" "scarcely belongs to the great period of forma-

³⁴ Stanton Coit, *The Soul of America*. The Macmillan Co., 1914.

³⁵ C. R. Bowen, *The Resurrection in the New Testament*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911.

³⁶ In the *New Republic*, June 9, 1917.

tive Christian theology." "In popular language personality means anthropomorphic individuality. . . . To believe that God has this kind of personality is not orthodox; it is not even heretical; it is merely heathenism of an inferior type." If this be true, it gives point to Dr. Moberly's admonition,³⁷ "Revise your conception of personality."

What matters, however, in the last analysis, is not how close our conception may approach, or how far it may veer, from the thought of earlier days; not even whether we are to use the term "God" or not; what is vital is that we should retain the sense of the worth and meaning of life which that sacred word connotes. Of the men of the future Mr. Lowes Dickinson writes,³⁸ "It may be a personal God that they conceive, it may be a 'tendency in the universe'; it may be something which they prefer to call 'Earth' or 'Nature'; it may be an 'Absolute'; but, in any case, it is something not themselves and greater than themselves, something which, by its mere existence, makes everything supremely worth while, overrides and subsumes Evil, intensifies and makes omnipresent Good, and concentrates and satisfies in itself those ideal impulses that otherwise would be tortured and broken about an imperfect self."

The immediate influence of the war is, on the whole, to deepen conventional conceptions of God. This is no time for any but a few detached thinkers to analyze coolly, to balance probabilities, to formulate new *aperçus*. Most men now must lean hard on what they already have. But after the war, when reconstruction is vigorous in every field, whither shall our masters lead us in this dearest of all quests?

Professor Coe, one of our keenest contemporary students of religion, assures us that "the thought of God

³⁷ W. H. Moberly, in *Foundations*. The Macmillan Co., 1913.

³⁸ G. Lowes Dickinson, *Religion, A Criticism and a Forecast*. New York, McClure, Phillips, & Co., 1905.

may, indeed, undergo yet many transformations, but in one form or another it will be continually renewed as an expression of the depth and the height of social aspiration.”³⁹ Is he a true prophet? Certainly there is no more interesting question for the future to answer. Are we going to abandon religion in the ardor of our new tasks? Are we to turn with renewed zeal to religion but free it more and more from theolatriy? Or are we perhaps at the verge of a great new vision of God, which shall lead us into ways that it hath not yet entered into our hearts to conceive?

³⁹ George A. Coe, *Psychology of Religion*. University of Chicago Press, 1916.